

DAVE FREUDENTHAL
GOVERNOR

THE STATE



OF WYOMING

STATE CAPITOL
CHEYENNE, WY 82002

Office of the Governor

August 18, 2006

The Honorable Craig Thomas
United States Senate
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Thomas:

As you are aware, the Jack Morrow Hills area of the Red Desert is home to Steamboat Mountain, the Killpecker Sand Dunes, a rare desert elk herd, the Boar's Tusk and ancient American Indian trails. Amongst the 574,800 acres of federal land and federal mineral estate, Wyoming residents have the opportunity to experience cultural, recreational and aesthetic opportunities that may be found nowhere else. The Bureau of Land Management's recent decision to amend the Jack Morrow Hills Coordinated Activity Plan provided protections for several of these sensitive areas – but it also left open the opportunity for full oil and gas development on existing leases in areas intended for protection.

During the scoping period of this project, the BLM identified the buy-back of oil and gas leases near protected areas as a management alternative for the Jack Morrow Hills. However, this management tool was rejected because it was not in the purview of the BLM to use. Additional concern has been expressed that the management plan in its final form does not establish a cap on the number of wells that can be developed in the project area. Therefore, areas with existing leases on or near special-protection areas are susceptible to immeasurable amounts of oil and gas development.

The BLM has shared with this office that a voluntary lease buy-back program could be implemented as a management tool if supported by congressional action. We would like to encourage you to sponsor legislation to fund a voluntary lease buy-back program for protected and sensitive areas in the Jack Morrow Hills and other unique areas in Wyoming. Your support would provide options that would allow the rich natural resources of Wyoming, including the Jack Morrow Hills area, to remain protected. Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Freudenthal", written over a large, stylized, looping flourish.

Dave Freudenthal
Governor

DF:TJ:pjb

c: Senator Mike Enzi
Representative Barbara Cubin